

*Sub b3*  
24. (Amended) The fiber bundle of Claim 17, wherein said fiber bundle comprises a total of about 8 to about 48 microfilaments.

*Sub b3*  
28. (Amended) A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of elastomeric polyurethane microfilaments and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments substantially surrounding said elastomeric polyurethane microfilaments, said elastomeric polyurethane and non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric polyurethane and non-elastomeric polypropylene components which split upon thermal activation, wherein the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric polypropylene microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the polypropylene component within the multicomponent fiber.

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30. (Amended) A fabric comprising a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric microfilaments within the fiber bundle is substantially identical to the weight ratio of the non-elastomeric component within the multicomponent fiber.

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32. (Amended) A product comprising the fabric of Claim 30, selected from the group consisting of synthetic suede and filtration media.

Please cancel Claims 34 through 47 without prejudice or disclaimer to the filing of divisional applications thereon.

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48

(Amended) A splittable multicomponent fiber comprising:  
at least one component comprising an elastomeric polymer, which is elastically deformed so that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original length upon release of drawing tension; and  
at least one component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer, which is plastically deformed so that said non-elastomeric component maintains substantially its same length after drawing upon release of drawing tension,  
wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal treatment and said elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments.

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(Amended) A fabric comprising a plurality of splittable multicomponent fibers comprising at least one polymer component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer which is plastically deformed so that said non-elastomeric component maintains substantially its same length after drawing upon release of drawing tension and at least one polymer component comprising an elastomeric polymer which is elastically deformed so that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original length upon release of drawing tension and release of adhesion to the non-elastomeric component;  
wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and said elastomeric and non-elastomeric polymer components are arranged in distinct unocclusive cross-sectional segments.

Please cancel Claims 60 – 62 without prejudice or disclaimer to the filing of divisional applications thereon.

Please add the following new claims:

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63. A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber whose cross section consists of contiguous segments of elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and after separation the elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments can be recombined to cumulatively define the approximate cross section of said multicomponent fiber.

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64. A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments exhibit comparable deniers.

65. A fiber bundle comprising a plurality of elastomeric microfilaments and a plurality of plastically deformed non-elastomeric microfilaments which are more bulked than said elastomeric microfilaments, said elastomeric and non-elastomeric microfilaments originating from a common multicomponent fiber having elastomeric and non-elastomeric components, wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from said non-elastomeric polymer so that said elastomeric component and said non-elastomeric component split upon thermal activation and further wherein the denier of said fiber

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~~bundle and the denier of said multicomponent fiber are substantially identical.~~ →

66. A splittable bicomponent fiber comprising:  
a first component comprising an elastomeric polymer, which is elastically deformed so  
that said elastomeric component is capable of substantially complete recovery to its original  
length upon release of drawing tension; and  
a second component comprising a non-elastomeric polymer, which is plastically  
deformed so that said non-elastomeric component maintains substantially its same length after  
drawing upon release of drawing tension,  
wherein said elastomeric polymer has a solubility parameter ( $\delta$ ) sufficiently different from  
said non-elastomeric polymer so that said first component and said second component split upon  
thermal treatment.